

What are the Sacraments?

S. C. Hughson, O.H.C.

PROBLEM PAPER NO. 45
PRICE TEN CENTS



What are the Sacraments?

EVERYONE who believes in Christianity at all believes that the Presence and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ within us is necessary if we are to live as faithful Christians.

But the great question is, How can I secure this Presence and grace within me? It is all very well to say it is necessary, but that gets nowhere unless we can find out how the necessity can be met. I may need a thousand dollars, but I am only baffled and frustrated unless I can find some way to get the money. Likewise, to realize that I need the grace of God will only lead me to utter discouragement unless I can find out how to get it.

Our Lord gave the grave warning that "Without Me ye can do nothing"; but, on the other hand, St. Paul made the holy boast, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." The same Apostle commands us to "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His

might" (Eph. 6:10). This kind of assurance and command is nothing less than a cruel mocking of my need unless I am told how I can lay hold of that strength. I cannot turn my weakness into strength by merely telling myself to be strong.

Are there some special means I can employ whereby I can secure the Presence and grace of God in my life? Most assuredly there are, and Christ Himself has not only prepared them, but He has commanded all men to use them.

These means are known as Sacraments. They are the God-appointed instruments by the use of which I can bring the God-Man Jesus Christ into my life, which is the same thing as saying that I can bring His strength and power into my life in such a way that I can use it in order to be like unto Him in my way of thinking, speaking, and acting.

Let us understand that we have His grace and strength and are able to use them, only because Christ Himself, the Incarnate God, gives Himself to us. We must take this truth very literally. No gift comes to us from our Lord which is separate from Him. He is Himself both the Gift and the Giver. The old Fathers of the Church used to

say that the Sacraments were "the extension of the Incarnation." This means that in and through them as instruments, the powers which Christ has as the God Incarnate are transmitted to all who desire His life and love and service.

WHAT IS A SACRAMENT?

IT IS of transcending importance that we have this indwelling of Christ in the soul that the powers of His human Nature may be ours. What, then, is a Sacrament? How do we distinguish them from other means that may be used in our Holy Religion? The Prayer Book definition of a Sacrament is familiar to us. It is "the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us; ordained by Christ Himself, as a means whereby we receive this grace and as a pledge to assure us thereof."

We find here five marks which distinguish a Sacrament from other religious practices or ceremonies:

(1) There must be an outward and visible sign, like the water in Baptism, or the bread and wine in Holy Communion.

(2) There must be an inward and spiritual

grace bestowed by God upon the soul.

(3) The Sacraments are ordained by Christ Himself.

(4) The Sacraments are the normal means and instruments the use of which is necessary in order to secure its grace for us.

(5) The outward sign is the pledge by which we are assured that we have really received the grace, so that we do not have to depend on the fickle testimony of our own hearts.

THE NUMBER AND ORDER OF THE SACRAMENTS

GOD has many kinds of grace to give to souls, and He has therefore decreed that there be many ways in which these graces are to be transmitted. Each Sacrament has its own special grace which cannot be secured in any other way than by worthily receiving that particular Sacrament. The grace of Baptism cannot be received in Holy Communion, nor that of Holy Communion in Baptism. And so on through all the Sacraments.

In accordance with this principle, Christ has ordained in His Church seven Sacraments, as follows:

Holy Baptism,
The Holy Eucharist,
Confirmation,
Penance,
Holy Order,
Holy Matrimony,
Holy Unction.

These Sacraments are divided into three groups. First, there are two Sacraments which are universally necessary to salvation, namely, Baptism and the Holy Eucharist. These are called Sacraments of the Gospel because our Lord Himself in the recorded Gospels appointed the outward ceremony, as well as the form of words to be used in administering them.

The second classification includes those which are applicable to everyone. As we have seen, the first amongst these are Baptism and the Holy Eucharist. In addition, Confirmation and Penance are universally applicable, although not universally necessary to salvation.

The third group is made up of those Sacraments the grace of which operates only in souls under certain conditions or living in particular states of life. These are three in number—Holy

epistle, the same apostle declares, "Baptism doth also now save us" (I St. Peter 3:21).

Such has been the constant teaching of the Church. In the Nicene Creed we declare, "I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins." So, Baptism is necessary for that remission of sins without which there is no salvation.

This brings us to the subject of the effects of Baptism on the soul. First of all, in this Sacrament one is made a member of Christ. He is grafted into the Sacred Humanity of Christ as a branch is grafted into a vine—as our Lord Himself said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches" (St. John 15:5). As the life of the vine flows into the branch, so the life of Christ flows into us. And as none of Satan's work can co-exist with the life of Christ in the soul, the moment He comes into us all sin that may be present is neutralized. Original sin is done away, and in the case of adults where actual sin has been committed, it is blotted out.

True, as St. Paul repeatedly warns us, concupiscence, or that downward pull of our fallen nature, is not wholly removed, and it is still possible for us to sin. But our Lord has given to us

His own human powers which He used in overcoming His temptations, and we are ensured against all mortal sin if only we will use the gifts He has made to us, as the Holy Spirit will teach us to do.

There are two other effects of Baptism which follow of necessity upon the first we have considered. If I am made one with Christ as the branch is one with the vine, then I along with Him, become a son of God, a member of the divine household, with all the privileges, in time and in eternity, of the Father's house. All the treasures of grace in this world, and of glory in the world to come, are opened to me.

I am also made an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, a co-heir with Christ Himself of the everlasting riches of the house of God. What these riches are, no man knows. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him" (I Cor. 2:9). But whatever the gifts and glory that are bestowed upon the risen, ascended and glorified Humanity of our Lord, I, as fellow-heir with Him, shall share.

Baptism is ordinarily to be administered by a priest, but in case of necessity anyone can baptize, and no infant, or any adult having faith and repentance, and desiring Baptism, should ever be allowed to die without this Sacrament. Where no one else can be found, Baptism should be administered even by an unbaptized person. A child can administer it. All that is required is the proper use of water and the necessary words commanded by our Lord, and to have the honest intention of doing what the Church requires.

The matter of this Sacrament, according to Christ's ordinance, is water, applied to the body of the person receiving it. How it is applied makes no difference. Pouring of the water upon the head of the candidate, or immersion into water, have always been the most common modes of baptizing.

The form, or words used in Baptism, were commanded by Christ Himself, as recorded in St. Matthew 28:19. They are, "I baptize thee in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." It is customary to pronounce the name of the person before the form of words,

and to add "Amen" at the end; although this is not of necessity.

THE HOLY EUCHARIST

THE Holy Eucharist is one of the Sacraments which our Lord declared to be necessary to salvation. He said, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood ye have no life in you" (St. John 6:53). The words *eat* and *drink* do not mean receiving the Sacrament once only. Their tenses show that they imply a habitual receiving of the Holy Communion.

The Holy Eucharist was instituted by our Lord in the night in which He was betrayed. The accounts of it are given in St. Matthew 26:26-28; in St. Mark 14:22-24; in St. Luke 22:19, 20; and by St. Paul in I Corinthians 11:23-29.

The matter used in the Eucharist must be wheat bread and wine made from the juice of the grape. The so-called "grape-juice" of commerce is not allowed, however.

The form of words is that used by our Lord Himself when He instituted the Eucharist—"This is My Body, This is My Blood." The priest in

celebrating does just what our Lord did, in obedience to His command, "Do this in remembrance of me."

The minister of the Eucharist is a man who has received ordination to the priesthood from a Bishop of the Apostolical Succession. The recipient of the Eucharist is one who has been baptized. Confirmation ordinarily precedes Communion, but this is not a necessary condition. Those who are "ready and desirous to be confirmed" may receive Communion under exceptional circumstances.

In studying the Eucharist we have to consider three things—(1) the Real Presence of Christ under The appearances of bread and wine; (2) the Sacrifice which is offered at every celebration of the Mass; and (3) the receiving by the faithful of Holy Communion.

By the Real and objective Presence we mean that the risen, ascended and glorified Christ, all that He is and all that He has, in both His humanity and His Divinity, is present in each separate species of the Eucharist. Being thus present, He is to be worshipped as very God of very God under each species. It is the objective Pres-

ence of His Humanity which makes this Eucharistic Presence unique.

How He can be thus present no man can explain. This is a part of the mystery of the Eucharist. We accept without any questioning His words, "This is My Body, This is My Blood." His word is sufficient, and we believe the literal fact as He stated it. This fact depends in no way upon the faith of the communicant, or of the celebrant. If His Presence depended on our faith, we could then make or unmake the Sacrament by believing or rejecting the truth.

Our Lord is therefore as truly present in the Eucharist as He was in the manger at Bethlehem, in the temple at Jerusalem, on the Cross on Good Friday, or at this moment at the Father's right hand in heaven. This Presence is a permanent one, and continues as long as the species of bread and wine continue to exist. This fact is the basis of the practice of reserving the Blessed Sacrament, and our Lord is worshipped in the Reserved Sacrament just as He is in the celebration of the Eucharist.

On the cross on Calvary our Lord made, as our liturgy expresses it, "by His one oblation of

Himself once offered, a full, perfect and sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation and Satisfaction for the sins of the whole world." To quote the Prayer Book again, He instituted the Eucharist as a "perpetual memory of that His precious death and sacrifice until His coming again," and thirty years later St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, says, "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do shew the Lord's death till He come" (I Cor. 11:26).

The important question is, To whom in this service do we show the Lord's death? Is it set forth, as some have thought, before the congregation, to remind them of the Lord's Passion as an event of nineteen centuries ago, or is it set forth before the Father as our pleading, here and now, of that Passion? The Prayer Book gives us the answer. Immediately after the consecration the priest is required to say, "Wherefore, O Lord and heavenly Father, according to the institution of Thy dearly beloved Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, we, thy humble servants, do celebrate and make *here before Thy divine Majesty*, with these Thy Holy Gifts, which we now offer unto Thee, the memorial Thy Son hath com-

manded us to make." The words of St. Paul are made clear by the Liturgy. The Eucharist is the offering of the Sacrifice of Calvary to the Father, "here" and "now."

We are not to fall into the crude error of thinking that this means a repetition of that Sacrifice. One of the most exact and complete expressions of the right teaching is found in Canon William Bright's hymn, which is so universally used at celebrations of the Liturgy:

"And now, O Father, mindful of the love
That bought us once for all on Calvary's tree,
And having with us Him that pleads above,
We here present, we here spread forth to Thee
That only Offering perfect in Thine eyes,
The one, true, pure, immortal Sacrifice."

No Sacrifice could be thus described save that which our Lord made on Calvary. Thus are we taught that the virtue and power of Calvary are perpetuated through all ages. In the tremendous moment when through the words and acts of the priest, the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of our Lord, we stand, as it were, on

Calvary, pleading that Sacrifice, presenting it to the Father in praise of Him, and as the great intercession for whatever we wish to ask of Him.

In the temple at Jerusalem when the devout Jew offered a lamb to God in sacrifice, a part of it was returned to him, and he took it home, and there with his family he made of it a solemn, sacrificial meal. Likewise in Holy Communion do we feed on the Divine Sacrifice, on the Lamb of God offered on Calvary.

A careful preparation must be made for this receiving of the Lamb of God. In order to make sure of receiving Him worthily, we have to examine ourselves to find out if we are in any serious sin.

There is also a preparation of the body, and from immemorial times Christians have received the Blessed Sacrament before any other food. This custom was ancient in St. Augustine's time in the fifth century, and he declared this practice of fasting Communion to have been ordained by the Holy Ghost.

We have already thought that in Communion we receive Christ, all that He is and all that He has, so far as we are capable of receiving Him.

His human powers, by the use of which He was able in all things to be pleasing to His Father, are in this Sacrament transmitted to us. He has a human mind, a human will and a human heart. If we receive Him, we receive the mind of Christ, so that we can think and plan our lives and actions as He would do. We have the will of Christ which fortifies our weak human wills enabling us to withstand every evil, and to do that which is right. We, too, receive the Heart of Christ which enables us to love as Christ would love. In every department of our moral and spiritual life by Holy Communion we are filled with all the fulness of God our Saviour, so that with the apostle we are enabled truly to say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

PART II

CONFIRMATION

WHILE there is no written record in the Gospels of the institution of Confirmation by our Lord, it is certain from many references to it that it was one of the duties He laid upon His

disciples when during the Great Forty Days after His Resurrection He was with them "speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." The author of the epistle to the Hebrews in the beginning of the sixth chapter declares it to be a part of the teaching of Christ. The Sacrament is described in two places in the Acts, in chapter eight, verses fourteen to seventeen, and in chapter nineteen, verses one to six. It is also referred to twice by St. Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians,—chapters 1:13 and 4:30. It is sometimes called the laying-on of hands, and also the sealing of the Spirit.

The matter of this Sacrament is the laying-on of the hands of a Bishop. No form of words is prescribed in the Scriptures, and this has differed in different ages and countries.

The age for confirmation is an important subject. It is an abuse which has arisen in late centuries to postpone the confirmation of children until they are ten or twelve years old. The doctrine which was set forth at the Reformation was that children should be confirmed by the Bishop in order that "they may receive strength and defense against all temptation to sin," when they

come to the age when "they begin to be in danger to fall into sin." It is absurd to say that a child is in no danger of falling into sin until he is ten or more years old.

The effects of this Sacrament are as follows:

(1) It imparts an increase of the sanctifying grace which the soul received in Baptism.

(2) It imparts the character of the soldier of Christ, giving it the equipment necessary for the spiritual combat which is inevitable in every life, so that it can stand in the power of the Spirit and win its victory over sin.

(3) In order to secure the two above mentioned effects, there is bestowed in Confirmation the completeness of the sevenfold gift of the Holy Spirit, that is to say, Wisdom, Understanding, Knowledge, Counsel, Ghostly Strength or Fortitude, Piety, and the Fear of the Lord. Wisdom is that spiritual taste which gives one an intuition as to right and wrong. Understanding is the capacity to see God's hand in the affairs of life and to receive the divine revelation. By Knowledge we are enabled to see created things in their right relation, and to use them for God's glory. Counsel is in the supernatural life what

prudence is in the natural. Fortitude is the Gift of endurance of hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Piety produces a filial attitude, so that we have an instinctive tendency to love and honour God as a Father. Holy Fear is another name for loving awe and reverence. It is not connected with the idea of being afraid save that of fearing to offend so dear and loving a Father.

PENANCE

WHEN our Lord first appeared to His disciples after His Resurrection, St. John tells us that He "breathed on them, and saith unto them, Whose soever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them, and whose soever sins ye retain they are retained." (St. John 20:22, 23.) This was the institution by our Lord of the Sacrament of Penance. He gave to the ministry of the Church the power to absolve the penitent, or, in case of impenitence, to refuse to absolve and thus to retain their sins. The Church transmits this power to every man ordained to the priesthood, and it can be exercised only by a priest.

Penance consists of three parts, Contrition,

Confession, and Satisfaction. Contrition means being sorry for my sins because they have wounded and offended a loving Father. This is what St. Paul calls "godly sorrow," as opposed to "the sorrow of the world," which is mere remorse, or regret because of the unhappy consequences which result.

Genuine sorrow for wrong doing, and a realization of the hurt my sin has done to God and to others, will naturally bring a desire to acknowledge the wrong I have done. This means confession. Nobody believes in the repentance of a man who carefully hides his sin.

The objective of every sacramental confession is absolution, by which the sinner is cleansed from every mortal sin, and has infused into his soul a special grace and strength for his special needs in time of temptation.

The giving of absolution by the priest is a judicial act. He is commissioned not merely to forgive sins, but either to forgive or, by refusing absolution in case of impenitence, to retain. It is impossible for him to be able to decide unless he knows the facts, and he can know them only if they are set before him. Confession is, there-

fore, the condition prerequisite to receiving absolution.

The Sacrament of Penance is the provision of a loving God who knows the needs of His children. He cleansed us in Baptism and we fell again into sin; but so far from casting us off, His tender love prepares still another Sacrament whereby we may, as often as we humbly repent, receive cleansing and peace. There is no ordinance of His love and mercy which so persistently as Penance proclaims to the soul, sorrowing for sin, the assurance of our Lord, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

HOLY ORDER

HOLY Order is a Sacrament ordained by our Lord by which special power is conferred for celebrating and administering Sacraments, and for performing other functions of the Church's ministry.

On Maundy Thursday night Christ made His apostles priests when, in instituting the Eucharist He commanded them— "Do this in remembrance of Me." Further evidence for His institution of Holy Order is found in the 20th chapter

of St. John, when, immediately before instituting the Sacrament of Penance, He said, "As My Father hath sent Me even so send I you. And when He had said this He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost."

The preface to the services of Ordination in the Prayer Book declares that "It is evident unto all men, diligently reading Holy Scriptures and ancient authors, that from the Apostles' time there have been these orders of ministers in Christ's Church, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons."

The minister of ordination is always a Bishop of the Apostolic Succession. This means a Bishop whose authority goes back in unbroken succession from Bishop to Bishop to the apostles who were ordained by our Lord Himself. No one who has not this succession has ever been held by the Catholic Church to have either the power or the authority to ordain. In order to make trebly sure of this succession (so essential does the Universal Church regard it), the great Council of Nicaea in the year 325, made it a rule for the whole Church that a Bishop should always be consecrated by at least three other Bishops. If one Bishop only should consecrate another

Bishop, it would be a valid consecration, but irregular according to the canons of the Universal Church.

When a man is ordained to the priesthood, he has conferred upon him the power, (1) to consecrate the Eucharist, (2) to give absolution from sin, and (3) to bless in the Name of God. Where a priest is made a Bishop, there is added to these powers that of ordaining to any order of the ministry. Such ordination impresses upon the soul a permanent quality which can never be lost either in time or eternity. Even should such a minister of the Apostolic Succession be deposed from the ministry, there is taken from him, not the powers of his office, but only the right to exercise its functions. Should he be restored to the exercise of his ministry, he would not be re-ordained.

HOLY MATRIMONY

THE Prayer Book declares that Holy Matrimony was "instituted in the time of man's innocency." Our Lord raised it to the rank of a Sacrament, reinstituting it as an indissoluble union between man and woman, "signifying unto

us the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and His Church" (See Eph. 5:22-32).

Our Lord, in the discourse on the subject which St. Mark records in the tenth chapter of his Gospel, abrogates the concessions which Moses had made because of "the hardness of their hearts," and reaffirms the sacred and permanent character of the union which marriage involves.

The essential thing in Matrimony is the full and voluntary consent of a man and a woman who are free to enter upon such a union. The impediments which would invalidate a marriage are the already existing marriage of either party; or the existence of a family relation within certain degrees. In case of "disparity of religion," as when one is baptized and the other is not, the union is non-sacramental, and while such a marriage is regarded by the Church as legally valid, it can be dissolved since it lacks the sacramental character.

The ministers of this Sacrament are the contracting parties themselves. The priest who may solemnize the marriage is the witness, representing the Church, and he bestows the Church's

blessing on the union they have contracted, but this blessing is not necessary, and its absence would in no way derogate from the Sacrament.

The effect of the Sacrament of Matrimony is the bestowal of a special grace which enables the contracting parties (1) to sustain the responsibilities peculiar to their state of life; (2) to enable them to use the privileges of the married estate chastely and in the fear of God; and (3) to bring up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. In respect to the second effect noted, it is to be kept in mind that the purpose of this Sacrament is to sanctify the propagation of the human species in order that a holy race may be multiplied for the honour of God both in this world, and in the eternal courts of heaven. To misuse the privileges of the marital estate for unbridled physical indulgence is to prostitute a holy thing, and to commit a sin near akin to sacrilege.

Our Lord's teaching of the indestructibility of the marriage bond is plainly set forth in the Gospels. In St. Luke 16:18 we read, "Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery; and whosoever marrieth

her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery." The same teaching is found in St. Mark 10:11, 12, and in three places in the epistles of St. Paul—Rom. 7:1-4; I Cor. 7:10, 11; and Eph. 5:22, 23. In all these there seems to be an implication that there are circumstances where a separation might be allowable, but such separation would not affect the marriage tie, and neither party would be free to marry another as long as the separated spouse lived. Should such a marriage take place it would be adulterous and would be no marriage at all in the sight of God.

In the Sermon on the Mount our Lord presented the same teaching as elsewhere, but gave marital unfaithfulness as the ground of a separation. In this passage his teaching is identical with the other passages so far as any remarriage whatever is concerned.

There is a passage in St. Matthew 19:9, which might be given the interpretation favourable to the innocent party in such a separation getting married again even though the separated spouse were still living. But many scholars hold that this passage is spurious, and practically all class

it as a "suspected reading." But aside from the judgment of scholars, the fact that it is a denial of the entire teaching of the rest of the New Testament throws upon it such grave suspicion that it would be exceedingly rash for anyone to accept its implications and act upon it.

In His institution of the Sacrament of Matrimony, and in the safeguards which His teaching throws about the married estate, the love of God for His people shines forth with a peculiar lustre. Here is seen the divine interest in the gracious love of husband and wife, the elevation of their union to a plane comparable to the ineffable oneness of Christ and His Church. Here is seen the tender care of the heavenly Father for the nurture of little children, for their upbringing within the holy and inviolable circle of family life which will guarantee their happiness on earth, and the securing of every help that they may be worthy members of His great eternal family.

HOLY UNCTION

HOLY Unction is a Sacrament ordained by our Lord for the strengthening of the souls and bodies of those who are sick; and in certain

cases for bodily healing. This Sacrament was foreshadowed, if not instituted, on the occasion of His sending forth His disciples, as narrated in St. Mark 6:13, with directions to heal the sick, anointing them with oil.

In St. James 5:14, 15, it is taken for granted that everyone knows of this Sacrament, and that the clergy of the Church expect to be summoned to the sick for its administration.

The minister of this Sacrament is any priest, and it may be administered to any faithful member of the Church who is in grave bodily illness. Emphasis is to be laid on the duty of not waiting until a patient is desperately ill or dying. The effects of Unction are set forth by St. James as follows:

(1) The remission of venial sins—"If he have committed sins they shall be forgiven him." In this passage the apostle is given certain admonitions "lest they fall into condemnation" (verse 12). He clearly does not think of them as in mortal sin, for then they would be in a state of "condemnation" already, and his instruction would be of a different nature.

(2) It imparts the special grace needed to

carry the soul through sickness, and possibly death.

(3) If it be the will of God, "the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up."

One hears it said sometimes that the healing of the sick is meant to be one of the ordinary functions of the priesthood, outside of the administration of this Sacrament, since the first disciples were sent forth by our Lord with this power, and actually exercised it. But these first disciples were also sent with power to raise the dead, which they actually did (Acts 9:40); to take up serpents without hurt, which they did (Acts 28:3-5); and to drink deadly things, which they did if we are to credit the entirely trustworthy tradition concerning St. John; and to speak miraculously through the gift of tongues. If healing the sick is meant to be an ordinary work of the ministry, then every priest should raise the dead, handle serpents and drink poison with impunity, and speak various languages without previous instruction.

Few will deny that the sick can be healed by prayer, and in every age saintly laymen and lay-

women, as well as the clergy, have exercised this power. But it has never been regarded as an ordinary function of the clergy of the Church, except as exercised through the Sacrament of Holy Unction.

Thus through the operation of the great system of Sacraments does God show His never-failing love for His children. From the cradle to grave, at every serious conjuncture in life, He stands with hands outstretched, ready to bestow upon us the supernatural Gifts of His grace. He claims us for His own in Baptism when we are unconscious infants; He supports us through all the changes and chances of this mortal life with the grace of one or another Sacrament as we may need it. And in our last hour, He makes us strong for the last passage with a special power inherent in Him as the God-Man, and which He shares with us.

"O that men would therefore praise the Lord for His goodness, and declare the wonders that He doeth for the children of men."